

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 173 804

CS 204 949

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TITLE Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Successful Selling of the Destroyer Deal.
PUB DATE Aug 79
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (62nd, Houston, Texas, August 5-8, 1979)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communication (Thought Transfer); European History; Federal Government; Information Dissemination; *Journalism; Modern History; *News Media; *News Reporting; *Propaganda; *Public Relations; *United States History
IDENTIFIERS *Roosevelt (Franklin D)

ABSTRACT

One of the most evident examples of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's mastery of the press and his manipulation of public opinion was the 1940 arrangement of the transfer of 50 United States naval destroyers to Great Britain while that nation was at war with Germany and Italy and while noninterventionist sentiment was quite strong in the United States. Factors important in Roosevelt's success include his overemphasis of the importance of British bases and his defense plans with Canada, his instigation of public discussion of the plan without his name attached, and his neutralization of the deal as a political issue by keeping his Republican opponent semiinformed through an intermediary. Although Roosevelt's relations with press columnists were antagonistic, he was friendly with and trusted by the Washington press corps. The key to the public relations aspect of the deal was keeping the destroyer issue separate from the bases issue so the merits of a complete deal could not be debated as a whole before the deal was accomplished. Roosevelt provided pieces of a puzzle, not allowing them to come together until the public was fully prepared. (DF)

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FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT'S
SUCCESSFUL SELLING OF THE DESTROYER DEAL

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Presented to the Public Relations Division, Association for
Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Houston, Texas, August, 1979

CS 284949

Columnist Heywood Broun once wrote that Franklin Delano Roosevelt "is the best newspaper man who has ever been president of the United States."¹ Raymond P. Brandt, chief of the Washington bureau of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch during the Roosevelt years, echoed Broun's sentiments when he claimed that Roosevelt "had the news sense of a managing editor."²

Yet, President Roosevelt's relationship with the press was a dichotomy. While he attacked the publishers and the columnists, he was extremely close to the Washington press corps and they were enamored with him. Roosevelt understood this dichotomous relationship and acted positively to use the media. While understanding fully the power of the motion picture and using the radio for his Fireside Chats, Roosevelt still believed that the newspaper remained the chief source of public information. His 998 press conferences during four administrations attest to that fact and it was through these press conferences that Roosevelt established a strong, personal relationship with the working press.³ Roosevelt and his administration were also adept at getting newsmen to take up trial balloons to allow a public dialog to develop before the President had to take a stand in the media. The Roosevelt administration and the President himself also made use of people with no connection to the administration to advance causes Roosevelt favored.

One of the most evident examples of Roosevelt's mastery of the press and manipulation of public opinion took place in 1940 when he arranged for the transfer of fifty destroyers to Great Britain while that country was at war with Germany and Italy and while isolationist and noninterventionist sentiment was still strong in the United States.

An analysis of three major newspapers in the United States, none of which supported Roosevelt in his early moves to aid the forces of England and France,

reflects the success of Roosevelt's public relations campaign to provide the destroyers for Great Britain. The New York Times complied with every nuance of the conditioning of the public to accept the destroyer deal. The Chicago Tribune, vitriolic in its insistence that America remain out of the war, even took credit for part of the complex deal which saw British bases in the Atlantic being leased to the United States. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, an isolationist newspaper, did much to unveil the behind-the-scenes public relations campaign. However, the Post-Dispatch's venom was neutralized in part by endorsing the concept of obtaining British bases.

The Roosevelt administration's campaign to solicit public support for getting those 50 destroyers in British waters involved five major thrusts. This campaign and how the three newspapers reacted will be the subject of this paper. The major thrusts included:

ONE: A nationwide radio broadcast by retired General John J. Pershing on August 4 calling upon the United States to sell destroyers to Great Britain.

TWO: Publication in the New York Times of a letter signed by respected private attorneys led by Dean Acheson. The letter to the editor, which was published on August 11, contended for the first time that President Roosevelt had the power to transfer the ships to Great Britain without congressional authority.

THREE: President Roosevelt's announcement at a press conference on August 16 that he was considering providing the destroyers for Great Britain's use in the war. Roosevelt was successful at this time in creating a two-part smokescreen that enveloped the destroyer question. He subordinated it to plans to acquire bases from Great Britain in the Western Hemisphere and to enter into joint defense plans with Canada. He insisted that all three were unrelated, thus

allowing them to be discussed separately by the media.

FOUR: Announcement September 3 that the deal had been consummated, calling for the leasing of bases on seven British and Canadian possessions for ninety-nine years and sending 50 destroyers to Great Britain. Roosevelt downplayed the destroyers, instead commenting that the acquisition of the bases was the most important thing "that has come for American defense since the Louisiana Purchase."⁴

FIVE: Diverting the issue from the political arena in an election year.

An understanding of Roosevelt's public relations campaign must include Roosevelt's concern for the desperate situation Great Britain faced in the spring and summer of 1940. Churchill's first message to Roosevelt after becoming prime minister May 10, 1940, contained the overriding request for the loan of 50 destroyers to bridge the gap until Great Britain's shipyards completed new destroyers in 1941.⁵ Almost half of the destroyer fleet in the British home navy had been destroyed by this time. Churchill also warned Roosevelt that unless the United States acted, that "You may have a completely subjugated Nazified Europe established with astonishing swiftness, and the weight may be more than we can bear."⁶ In his reply May 16, Roosevelt said that he could not provide the destroyers since approval would be needed from a reluctant Congress and that the destroyers were needed by the United States.⁷

Churchill continued to plead for the destroyers especially after the astonishing fall of France in June. At this time the Germans appeared to be planning for a cross-channel attack.⁸ Roosevelt then began using the flexibility of policy that was reminiscent of the days of his New Deal legislation, searching for loopholes in the law and public support for meeting Churchill's request. The influence of friends and advisers is reflected by a short memo placed in the files of Roosevelt's secret correspondence. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr.,

who was designated by the President as an informal cabinet liaison between foreign arms purchasers and American manufacturers in the cash-and-carry policies, sent Roosevelt a confidential British report on destroyer weaknesses. The secretary wrote:

After reading this unless we do something to give the English additional destroyers, it seems to me it is absolutely hopeless to expect them to keep going.⁹

The Roosevelt Administration's first salvo in the public discussion of the destroyers came on August 4 when General Pershing made his radio address. In it he called for selling destroyers to Great Britain. There was no mention of an exchange for bases.¹⁰ Roosevelt kept his distance from Pershing's public stance. He merely said at a press conference after the Pershing address that "there is nothing new at the present time."¹¹ Yet, it was Roosevelt's lieutenants and supporters who urged Pershing to make the address. Toward the end of July, Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, a Roosevelt confidant, got the idea of asking Pershing to speak out on the destroyer issue when Frankfurter spoke to members of the Century Club, an interventionist group of influential citizens who were willing to do Roosevelt's bidding in helping Great Britain.¹² Secretary of War Henry Stimson and members of the Century Club got Pershing to acquiesce in making the personal appeal.

The New York Times treated Pershing's speech as its major story for its August 5 edition. The story stressed Pershing's view that American defense depended upon selling the 50 destroyers to Great Britain. In its headlines, the Times took up the ploy that these were "old" destroyers.¹³ This was to be used time and again in referring to the destroyers, which had been constructed just after the end of World War 1, but which had been reconditioned and were being used to patrol American waters. That latter fact was not to be stressed by

the Roosevelt administration or by the Times. On Page 3 of the August 5 edition, the Times also carried a plea from Joseph Alsop and Robert Kintner that Great Britain's survival depended upon the destroyers. The article, which the two wrote for the North American Newspaper Alliance, was not marked as an editorial column or an analysis, but ran in a news column next to the continuation of the Pershing story.¹⁴ Not mentioned was the fact that Alsop was a member of the Century Club which had been instrumental in devising the Pershing speech and in bringing the destroyer issue into public debate.¹⁵ On August 6, the Times endorsed the Pershing recommendation, calling upon Congress to approve such a sale and saying the destroyers would be of better use to Great Britain than in "patrolling the remote coasts of Brazil and Patagonia long after Germany has won."¹⁶

The Chicago Tribune also played the Pershing radio talk as the top story of the day on August 5, but reacted in a hostile manner to the suggestion of trading away any destroyers to Great Britain. A headline on the story said the radio address was the climax to the interventionist drive. Written by Chesley Manley, the story claimed arrangements for the Pershing speech were made by Senator Claude Pepper, a Florida Democrat and close ally of Roosevelt, and by Alsop, who was described as a "distant cousin of Roosevelt."¹⁷ Manley correctly observed in his story that the talk was aimed at softening up Americans to condition the public mind and prepare Congress for the proposal. In the same Tribune edition an editorial called such a transferral of destroyers an "act of war."¹⁸ In a follow-up story on August 6, the Tribune quoted Chicago lawyers as seeing any transfer of the destroyers as a violation of the Neutrality Act of 1917 and a violation of international law. However, nowhere in the articles did the Tribune attack the integrity of General Pershing. The stance by the Chicago Tribune against the destroyer proposal was in keeping with Colonel McCormick's isolationist and

anti-Roosevelt policies, but the publisher of the Tribune did not attack the World War 1 commander under whom he had served. So Roosevelt got his proxy to put the proposal before the public. The Tribune was Roosevelt's harshest critic at the time. Author James E. Pollard wrote: "Of all the newspapers arrayed against him (Roosevelt), probably none hated him more cordially or criticised him more harshly or continually than the Chicago Tribune."¹⁹

The Post-Dispatch also played the Pershing story on Page 1, using a dispassionate Associated Press wire story. The paper saved its jibe at the proposal for an editorial which asked: "Is America ready to give away needed defense units while working desperately to rearm? Is it ready to commit an act of war?"²⁰ The editorial also praised the stance of Colonel Charles Lindbergh who called for American neutrality in a speech in Chicago on August 4.

On August 6, the Post-Dispatch gave balanced coverage to the Pershing and Lindbergh speeches, running a series of editorials from newspapers around the nation, some of which called for sale of the destroyers. The Post-Dispatch also ran a column by Major George Fielding Eliot, a contributing columnist and military author. He declared that the issue of the ships for Britain is up to the President, not a subject for debate, and if the US could save England, they should be sent.²¹ In an editorial that day, the Post-Dispatch kept questioning the sale of the destroyers, but also called upon the White House to make its intentions known to the public so a full-scale debate could be held on foreign policy.²² Roosevelt did not take its bait.

While the destroyer sale was being debated in the public forum, Roosevelt sat back and watched public opinion. On August 19, a Gallup poll showed that more than sixty percent of persons interviewed across the nation favored selling destroyers to the British.²³ Now the Roosevelt Administration's foremost concern

was tactical--how could the White House provide Great Britain with ships legally and bypass an uncertain Congress.

Roosevelt had rejected as untenable a proposal given him in a memo by Benjamin Cohen on July 19. Cohen, a lawyer in the Roosevelt Administration, had claimed that the United States could transfer the ships legally without obtaining any congressional authorization.²⁴ In August, however, this proposal was refurbished by Supreme Court Justice Frankfurter, who thought there was sensible reasoning in the memo. He got Cohen to confer with Dean Acheson and to prepare a legal brief. They produced an opinion, which among other things skirted the provisions of the Espionage Act of 1917 on transferring war materials to a belligerent. Acheson and three other prominent attorneys signed the opinion and had it published as a letter to the editor of the New York Times on August 11. Phillip Goodhart, who wrote a major study on the destroyer deal in 1965, concluded that the "legal opinion must rank as one of the most important letters to the editor ever published."²⁴ The Roosevelt Administration had succeeded in keeping the President's name from being linked to the letter. After the letter appeared, high officials in Washington began thinking that congressional action would not be needed. On August 15, Justice Frankfurter telephoned Secretary of War Stimson to say he believed the Acheson legal opinion was sound. Stimson called the President, who became encouraged and said he would talk to Attorney General Robert Jackson about going ahead with the matter.²⁵ Now the path was clear for the President to bring up his desire to furnish Great Britain with the ships.

On August 16, President Roosevelt at a press conference revealed his interest in providing Great Britain with warships. However, Roosevelt did everything to keep the question of destroyers and use of British and Canadian bases as separate items. In his first public reference on the matter, Roosevelt created a two-part

smokescreen that enveloped the destroyer question. Roosevelt first explained that American military officers were in Great Britain "in regard to the acquisition of naval and air bases by the United States for American hemisphere defense, with special reference to the Panama Canal."²⁶ In the second aspect of his smokescreen, Roosevelt announced that the United States Government "is carrying on conversations with the Canadian Government, looking towards the defense of the American hemisphere."²⁷ Asked if the two matters were related to the destroyers, Roosevelt said: "I would not use it on destroyers if I were you. This is just a little private tip."²⁸ Roosevelt said this, despite records that were to be revealed years later that showed as early as August 5 Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador to the United States, had sent Roosevelt a letter discussing the tie-in between destroyers and bases.²⁹ Roosevelt noted at the August 16 press conference that the destroyer acquisition was also being discussed, but told the newsmen that the "emphasis is on this hemisphere."³⁰ Roosevelt's comments came hours after the New York Times made its first public mention linking the leases and the destroyers. The information was attributed to "well-authenticated advisers from London."³¹ The story contained material similar to that in the private dispatches between Roosevelt and Churchill. This suggests that the story was leaked to journalists as a trial balloon, a device used commonly by public officials to see what public reaction would be to an idea they have not publicly endorsed.

Underneath the news account was a related item about a speech made by Senator Josh Lee, D-Oklahoma, on the floor of the Senate. Lee had just conferred with President Roosevelt and announced in the Senate that Roosevelt could transfer the destroyers to Great Britain without any change in the law. The story also carried Secretary Morgenthau's statement at a press conference that Britain's

months-old request for destroyers was "still alive."³²

When the New York Times ran its story on the August 16 press conference, the lead contained the President's announcement of the negotiation for the bases, followed by the talks with Canada on hemispherical defense. The third paragraph contained the President's denial of any connection between the negotiations for the bases and the requested destroyers.³³

In an editorial August 17, the Times praised Roosevelt's announcements of the talks on defense agreements with Canada and Great Britain. The editorial did not refer to the destroyers.³⁴

The American-Canadian talks provided the paramount issue of the press conference that was discussed in the New York Times' news columns in the last half of August. Roosevelt even made a special train trip to Ogdensburg, New York, on August 17. The defensive nature of the meeting with Canada, while it was at war with Germany, still was such that it made the discussions questionable bait for attack by isolationists. On August 18, Roosevelt and Canadian Prime Minister MacKenzie King made further headlines with the announcement of the creation of a permanent Joint Board of Defense.³⁵ The appointment of the board members, one of whom was New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, and of the board's meetings became substance of Times news copy for days to come. This connected even more closely the defense of the United States with that of the hemisphere.

The Chicago Tribune covered the events of August 16 very closely, claiming in a news story that Roosevelt's "scheme"³⁶ drew hostile reaction on the Senate floor when Lee spoke. As to the press conference, the Tribune reported that the destroyer deal was imminent and ignored the President's advice to say it had nothing to do with the bases. The Tribune tied it in with the base discussions and the Canadian talks. The paper reported that apart from the proposed release of American

destroyers, there appeared to be little opposition among congressional non-interventionists regarding the acquisition of naval and air bases in the Western Hemisphere.³⁷ On the same page, the Tribune reported in another story that the Canadian prime minister was to meet that night with Roosevelt and speculated that negotiations for the bases would be one topic for discussion. The following day, August 19, the Tribune featured in a Page 1 story the Roosevelt-King talks; on page 4, the Tribune took credit for keeping alive the idea of a defense agreement between Canada and the United States, noting it had first advocated such an agreement in an editorial on April 3, 1938.³⁸ On August 20, the Tribune ran an editorial praising the Canadian-U.S. talks and also claimed it was the Tribune's idea.³⁹ The Tribune also carried separate stories on the basic acquisition in the ensuing days, including one story suggesting that Roosevelt had made an "about face"⁴⁰ in attempting to secure the British bases, a move the Tribune said had the support of many senators. Despite the fact that the Tribune had originally lumped together all three items from the President's news conference on August 16 as a package deal, the paper was to treat each item separately in the days before the deal was consummated. Even in an editorial on August 24 in which any destroyer transfer was termed as a conspiracy to make war, the Tribune made no link or even mention of the Canadian talks and the base acquisition. Clearly, Roosevelt had been successful in dealing with an enemy in his campaign to have the issues of the destroyer deal discussed separately.

The Post-Dispatch saw through Roosevelt's attempt to keep the issues separate. In a Page 1 story on August 16, it was stated that despite what Roosevelt said, the destroyers would be traded for the bases.⁴¹ Yet, the Post-Dispatch editorialized the next day that it had favored for ten years the acquisition of strategic bases in the Western Hemisphere for the safety of the Panama Canal. However, the

editorial made a general statement that "any thought of bartering away our Navy should be squelched."⁴² But the writer did not specifically mention 50 destroyers. The Post-Dispatch treated Canadian talks as just routine news, carrying wire service accounts.

President Roosevelt kept close-mouthed on the negotiations during other press conferences late in August and early in September. Finally on September 3, when the official announcement of the destroyers-for-bases agreement was made in Washington and London, the President informed reporters about it during a press conference on a special train en route from Charleston, West Virginia, to Washington. Roosevelt told reporters that it was probably the most important thing that "has come for American defense since the Louisiana Purchase."⁴³ He picked his example carefully. The Louisiana Purchase was an instance in which an American president made a deal with a foreign country to acquire territory without consulting Congress. In fact, Roosevelt gave reporters on the train a not-for-attribution, historical background briefing on Thomas Jefferson's approval of his emissaries' actions to offer France \$15 million for the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. One defence consideration which prompted negotiations with Napoleon at the time was the need for the United States to acquire for defense purposes the area around the mouth of the Mississippi River. In the press conference, Roosevelt talked at length about the acquisition of the bases and he referred only briefly to the destroyer exchange.

While Roosevelt told reporters on the train of the exchange, White House officials sent to the Congress statements from the President, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Lord Lothian, Attorney General Robert Jackson and Chief of Naval Operations Harold Stark. Jackson offered a legal rationale for the transaction and Stark certified that the 50 destroyers were not essential to the national

defense and that the exchange would strengthen America's defense. Stark thus fulfilled the requirements in a law passed by Congress the previous June 24.

In its account of the Roosevelt press conference, the New York Times went with Roosevelt's emphasis. The first two paragraphs of the news account, which ran as a sidebar to the announcement out of Washington, said:

ON BOARD ROOSEVELT TRAIN, Sept. 3 -- President Roosevelt indicated that the chief value of the trade with Great Britain of fifty over-age destroyers for naval and air base sites in British crown colonies in the Western Hemisphere lay in the fact that this outer line of defense would keep any enemy away from the country's front door.

For that reason, he said, his agreement with the British Government was more important for the defense of this country than anything since the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, which assured American military control over the Mississippi River.⁴

The Times reporter, it should be noted, took Roosevelt's background material and incorporated it into the body of the story as objective observations. The Times, in effect, portrayed the deal the way Roosevelt had wanted it done.

The Times devoted most of its front page to dispatches relating to the transfer. The lead story focused on the acquisition of the bases, stressing the fact that they created a 4,500-mile defense line that "is intended to make difficult, if not impossible, naval and air attacks upon the United States and much of the New World."

The most bitter reaction in the New York Times on September 4 was published in a full-page editorial advertisement, which had no sponsor listed. The advertisement combined only an editorial from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch of September 3 that carried criticism Roosevelt had sought to avoid. The first part of the editorial read:

Mr. Roosevelt today committed an act of war. He also became America's first dictator. Secretly, his Secretary of State, Mr. Hull, entered into an agreement with the British Ambassador that amounts to a military and naval alliance with Great Britain. This secretly negotiated agreement was consummated yesterday, September 2.

Today Congress is informed of the agreement. Note well the word "informed." Although the President referred to his under-cover deal as ranking in importance with the Louisiana Purchase, he is not asking Congress -- to ratify this deal. He is telling⁴⁵ them it already has been ratified by him -- America's dictator.

Despite this vehement editorial, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch was a model of balanced presentation in handling the destroyer deal on Page 1. The lead headline: "U.S. TRADES DESTROYERS FOR BASES."⁴⁶ The second ribbon headline read: "ROOSEVELT ANNOUNCES DEAL WITH BRITAIN."⁴⁷ The readout headline stated: "CONGRESS IS NOTIFIED; PRESIDENT SAYS MOVE THREATENS NO NATION."⁴⁸ The lead story was an Associated Press dispatch. The second lead story was written by Raymond Brandt, chief of the Post-Dispatch's Washington bureau. He stressed in his line that the bases were the most significant happening for American defense since the Louisiana Purchase.⁴⁹ Also on Page 1 was the text of the President's message to Congress on the destroyers and a text of the exchange of notes between Lord Lothian and Secretary Hull.⁵⁰ At the bottom of the page was an Associated Press dispatch from London that said the British assured Washington that in the event of defeat, the Nazis would not get the American destroyers.⁵¹ The latter involved another aspect of the deal which related to Roosevelt's demand to Churchill to make this assurance public.

The next afternoon, the balance of news presentation prevailed again on Page 1. The headline to the lead story read: "U.S. SPEEDS DESTROYER TRANSFER, SENDS ARMY -- NAVY BOARD TO HELP WORK OUT BERMUDA DETAIL."⁵² Another Page 1 story dealt entirely with how a storm of controversy was to break in Congress over the destroyer transfer, while the lead editorial praised the acquisition of bases in the Western Hemisphere.

Meanwhile, the Chicago Tribune in an editorial took some credit for the transaction.

The editorial, which never mentioned the destroyers, said in part:

THE TRIBUNE rejoices to make this announcement which fulfills a policy advocated by this newspaper since 1922. In spite of much discouragement THE TRIBUNE persisted, month by month and year by year, in calling for these additions to the national defense. It may be found, as we think it will be, this is the greatest contribution of this newspaper to the country's history since the nomination of Lincoln.⁵⁵

Roosevelt's campaign to neutralize the transaction as a political issue also paid off on the day of the announcement. The Roosevelt Cabinet had recommended on August 2 that efforts be made to use William Allen White, the anti-isolationist Republican editor from Kansas, to sound out Republican presidential nominee Wendell Willkie.⁵⁶ On August 11, White telephoned Roosevelt to say there was no difference between the presidential candidates on the destroyer issue, although White could not guarantee a public statement.⁵⁷ In his first public reaction to the destroyers-for-bases announcement, Willkie said that the President should have sought Congressional approval, and should have generated public debate on the final proposals. Willkie said, however, that he believed the public would approve the agreement. He had nothing disparaging to say about supplying Great Britain with the ships.⁵⁸ The three newspapers carried Willkie's views.

To be sure, anti-interventionist newspapers like the Chicago Tribune and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch were on to some of the movements and machinations in the White House while the destroyer deal was being concocted. On August 12, the Tribune in an editorial decried the fact that Wendell Willkie had been approached to approve Roosevelt's war policy, specifically the sale of 50 destroyers to England.⁵⁹ On August 17, in a story on Page 4, the Tribune reported that Attorney General Jackson was engaged in preparing a new opinion which will hold the move to transfer the 50 destroyers legal if the chief of naval operations should certify

that the vessels are not essential to defense.⁶⁰ On September 1, in a Page 1 story, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch said Roosevelt had the deal all ready but was only waiting for the propitious moment when the sale or trade of the destroyers would win public acceptance.⁶¹ Yet these stories didn't derail the plans of Roosevelt's lieutenants; didn't tie in for certain the bases and the destroyers, or didn't bring a halt to the deal. It should be noted that Roosevelt also rode the crest of public opinion as it changed in this country when the Nazis took more and more territory in Western Europe.

A Gallup Poll released on February 21, 1940, showed that 77 percent of the persons questioned believed that the U.S. should not declare war on Germany if France and England fall.⁶² On March 4, the Gallup Poll revealed that 55 percent of those questioned believed that the United States should loan money to France and England so they could purchase war supplies.⁶³ At the end of June, a poll taken just before the fall of France showed that 80 percent of Americans questioned agreed with Roosevelt's move to make it possible for France and England to buy American war planes.⁶⁴

Public opinion was watched, the press was used and the destroyer deal was accomplished. America had taken its first giant step toward war and isolationist thunder was muffled.

CONCLUSION

Roosevelt got his way in providing the destroyers through his overemphasis on the importance of the bases and his defense plans with Canada. He first allowed the idea of providing the destroyers to be talked about in public, without his name or intentions attached. The idea gained momentum. The New York Times reported on August 19 that a Gallup Poll showed more than 60 percent of the

persons interviewed across the nation favored selling destroyers to the British. The poll was taken after General Pershing made his public appeal, a plea to the public that had its origins in the Century Club and in the Roosevelt Administration. By then, Roosevelt could go ahead. Roosevelt also all but neutralized the destroyer deal as a political item. He did it by keeping his Republican opponent semi-informed through White. Roosevelt found that he could take heart in that Willkie was not opposed to the transaction. With the press, Roosevelt showed his mastery of the situation. Through his 228 press conferences while President, Roosevelt made himself available to the press more than any other president. He was trusted by the Washington press corps. His background, off-the-record material was used verbatim by the Times when the destroyer deal was announced. And the Post-Dispatch Washington bureau chief, Brandt, also alluded to the Louisiana Purchase concept in his story.

The key to the public relations aspect was keeping the destroyer issue separate from the bases so the merits of a complete deal could not be debated as a whole before the deed was accomplished. While the destroyer deal was being put together, Roosevelt provided pieces of a puzzle. He did not allow the pieces to come together until they fitted in well with the prepared public. The destroyer deal worked because President Roosevelt was in charge throughout the campaign -- he managed the news.

NOTES

- ¹James E. Pollard, The Presidents and The Press (New York: MacMillan, 1947), p. 781
- ²Ibid.
- ³Ibid. p. 773.
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- ⁵Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, The Messages Between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston S. Churchill, 1939-1945, and Related Materials, Roll 1 (Washington: National Historical Publications Commission Microfilm Publications Program, 1973).
- ⁶Ibid.
- ⁷Ibid.
- ⁸Philip Goodhart, Fifty Ships That Saved The War (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 16.
- ⁹Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Messages.
- ¹⁰Philip Goodhart, pp. 159-160.
- ¹¹Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Complete Presidential Conferences, pp. 97-99.
- ¹²Philip Goodhart, p. 159.
- ¹³New York Times, 5 August 1940, p. 1.
- ¹⁴New York Times, 5 August 1940, p. 3.
- ¹⁵Chicago Tribune, 5 August 1940, p. 1.
- ¹⁶New York Times, 6 August 1940, p. 18.
- ¹⁷Chicago Tribune, 5 August 1940, p. 1.
- ¹⁸Chicago Tribune, 5 August 1940, p. 12.
- ¹⁹Pollard, p. 797.
- ²⁰St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 6 August 1940, p. 1C.

- ²¹ St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 6 August 1940, p. 2C.
- ²² George E. Gallup, The Gallup Poll, Public Opinion 1935-1971, Vol. 1, (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 237.
- ²³ Elliott Roosevelt, ed., F.D.R. His Personal Letters, 1928-1945 (New York: Sloan and Pearce, 1950), pp. 1048-49.
- ²⁴ Goodhart, p. 163.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Complete Presidential Conferences, pp. 123-24.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of The United States, 1940, Vol. 3: The British Commonwealth, The Soviet Union, The Near East and Africa (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1958), p. 61.
- ³⁰ Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Complete Presidential Conferences, pp. 123-124.
- ³¹ New York Times, 16 August 1940, p. 1.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ New York Times, 17 August 1940, p. 1.
- ³⁴ New York Times, 17 August 1940, p. 14.
- ³⁵ New York Times, 18 August 1940, p. 1.
- ³⁶ Chicago Tribune, 17 August 1940, p. 3.
- ³⁷ Chicago Tribune, 17 August 1940, p. 4.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Chicago Tribune, 20 August 1940, p. 10.
- ⁴⁰ Chicago Tribune, 20 August 1940, p. 5.
- ⁴¹ St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 16 August 1940, p. 1.
- ⁴² St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 17 August 1940, p. 4A.

⁴³Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Complete Presidential Conferences, pp. 173-174.

⁴⁴New York Times, 4 September 1940, p. 1.

⁴⁵New York Times, 4 September 1940, p. 19.

⁴⁶St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 3 September 1940, p. 1.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 4 September 1940, p. 1.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Chicago Tribune, 4 September 1940, p. 14.

⁵⁶Department of State, pp. 59-59.

⁵⁷Joseph Barnes, Willkie, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952), p. 202.

⁵⁸New York Times, 4 September 1940, p. 1.

⁵⁹Chicago Tribune, 12 August 1940, p. 12.

⁶⁰Chicago Tribune, 17 August 1940, p. 4.

⁶¹St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 1 September 1940, p. 1.

⁶²Gallup, p. 211.

⁶³Gallup, p. 212.

⁶⁴Gallup, p. 230.